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Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
Eighty-ninth session

Summary record of the 2432nd meeting
Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Monday, 2 May 2016, at 3.05 p.m.

Chair: Mr. Calí Tzay (Vice-Chair)

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Combined sixth to eighth periodic reports of Georgia

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Consideration of reports, comments and information submitted by States parties under article 9 of the Convention (*continued*)

Combined sixth to eighth periodic reports of Georgia (CERD/C/GEO/6-8 and CERD/C/GEO/Q/6-8)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Georgia took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Ms. Totladze** (Georgia) said that a National Action Plan for the Protection of Human Rights was being finalized for the period 2016-2017 in order to coordinate government efforts to implement the provisions of international human rights treaties and the recommendations received by Georgia following its universal periodic review. In that connection, various monitoring and coordination bodies, such as the Gender Equality Council and the Committee on Human Rights and Civil Integration, had been established. A comprehensive Human Rights Strategy (2014-2020) and Action Plan (2014-2015) had also been adopted by the Government.

3. In addition, an anti-discrimination law had been adopted in 2014, following a drafting process involving all relevant government ministries and non-governmental organizations. Both direct and indirect forms of discrimination, on a wide range of grounds, were prohibited by the law. The Public Defender's Office was tasked with monitoring the implementation of the law, through its Equality Department. Between 2013 and 2015 the budget of that office had increased by 77 per cent.

4. The Criminal Code of Georgia had also been amended; any crime committed on discriminatory grounds was now considered to be aggravated. A range of awareness-raising and training activities had been carried out for law enforcement personnel, in collaboration with the Public Defender's Office and various international organizations. The number of criminal investigations conducted by the authorities into cases involving religious intolerance had increased each year and charges had been brought in 6 out of 9 cases in 2016.

5. The Georgian Government was committed to providing decent living conditions for all internally displaced persons. Nonetheless, the only appropriate, long-term solution was the voluntary return of those persons, in accordance with United Nations General Assembly Resolution 62/249 on the status of internally displaced persons and refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia. The Government had invested in durable housing solutions for internally displaced persons, dramatically increasing the State budget in that area. Efforts had also been made to provide financial assistance for mortgage loans for those persons as well as to facilitate their employment and education.

6. Georgia had a number of large ethnic minority populations, including Azerbaijanis and Armenians. A new Civic Equality and Integration Strategy and Action Plan had been adopted for the period 2015-2020, to coordinate State policy on ethnic minorities. The Strategy would promote equality and the economic and social integration of all minorities, especially the Roma. Ethnic minorities had access to education, at all levels, in their native languages. Television and radio programmes were broadcast in five different national minority languages and print media were also available in a number of different languages. Representatives of ethnic minority communities were well represented in public bodies as well as in local and national elections. There were seven ethnic minority representatives at present in the Parliament of Georgia. However, ethnic identity was not registered by the State authorities, so all such data were based on self-identification and reports and surveys. The Government also implemented measures to provide ethnic minorities with information

on health care and social benefits in their native languages and to support activities which promoted the culture of ethnic minorities.

7. Between 2012 and 2015, 275 Roma had been registered with the authorities and granted appropriate legal status. They also had access to free legal advice. The Ministry of Education was implementing a social inclusion programme to support the integration of vulnerable groups, including Roma, into the formal education system. As a result of the programme, the number of Roma children attending school had almost doubled between 2014 and 2015. A project funded by the European Union, entitled Reaching Highly Vulnerable Children in Georgia with a Focus on Children Living or Working on the Streets, had set up a number of centres providing assistance and care to vulnerable children.

8. Georgia had ratified the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness in 2014 and had subsequently amended the Organic Law on Citizenship of Georgia in order to set up mechanisms to reduce the number of stateless persons. In terms of education, asylum-seekers and refugees were granted the same rights as Georgian citizens. Under Georgia's Migration Strategy and Action Plan, integration programmes, including health care, legal aid, accommodation and education services, would be provided to migrants.

9. Non-discriminatory access to health care was guaranteed to citizens and non-citizens alike under the laws of Georgia. Information campaigns on Georgia's health-care programmes specifically targeted ethnic minorities, in order to raise awareness of the services available.

10. To date, 5,841 persons from 7 different countries had applied for repatriate status, in the context of the repatriation of persons forcibly deported from Georgia by the Soviet Union in the 1940s. A simplified procedure to acquire Georgian citizenship had been established for those persons. The repatriation strategy was based on the principles of equality and non-discrimination.

11. Two regions of Georgia, Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region, were occupied by the Russian Federation. Since 2008, the ethnic Georgian population in those regions had been subjected to discriminatory acts, including armed attacks, arbitrary detention and ill-treatment. The Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court had previously stated that crimes committed against ethnic Georgians had been carried out on discriminatory grounds. As a result of the violence against ethnic Georgians in South Ossetia, there had been a significant reduction in their numbers, estimated at around 75 per cent. Discriminatory practices against ethnic Georgians had also been recorded on the administrative border between the occupied regions and Georgia, including instances of alleged arbitrary detention and ill-treatment. Ethnic Georgians were not granted equal property rights or access to education in their native language in the occupied regions. The legal status of ethnic Georgians in those regions had recently been called into question, sparking fears of even greater difficulties in exercising their rights on an equal footing with other citizens in the future. The Georgian Government called on the international community to set up monitoring mechanisms in the occupied regions, in order to improve the human rights situation.

12. The Government provided free health care to persons living in the occupied regions and also facilitated their access to higher education programmes in Georgia. Various programmes to provide utility services in border regions had also been carried out.

13. **Ms. Crickley**, speaking in her capacity as Country Rapporteur, said that the Committee was grateful to the State party for having submitted its periodic report on time but that, in future, it should endeavour to adhere more closely to the prescribed word limit. The State party should also ensure that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) had the opportunity to participate in future interactive dialogues with the Committee, as they made a valuable contribution to its work.

14. The Committee recognized that Georgia had been confronted with ethnic and political conflicts in Abkhazia, Georgia and South Ossetia, Georgia since gaining its independence and that those territories remained outside its effective control, which made it impossible to implement the Convention fully in its national territory. However, there was no doubt that those ongoing ethnic and political conflicts had implications for the situation of refugees and internally displaced persons in Georgia. The State party's core document (HRI/CORE/1/Add.90/Rev.1), while rich in information, dated back to 1999 and needed to be updated.

15. The results of the census conducted in 2014 showed a marked decline in the country's ethnic Georgian population and an even greater decline in its ethnic minority population. It would be useful to receive statistical data, disaggregated by age and sex, on the ethnic composition and demographic distribution of the population to complement the results of the census. The Committee would be particularly interested to learn more about the population of the smaller ethnic groups living in Georgia, such as Jews, Assyrians, Kurds and Greeks. She asked what progress the State party had made in increasing the participation of ethnic minority groups and women from ethnic minority groups, in particular in national decision-making processes. She would also like to receive assurances from the State party that the current electoral district boundaries would not have a negative impact on the participation of ethnic minority groups in the 2016 elections or their representation in the Georgian Parliament. She also wished to know of the measures in place to facilitate the social integration of persons belonging to ethnic minority groups in Tbilisi and to ensure their continued representation on the Tbilisi city council.

16. The State party's use of the term "ethnic/national minorities" in its periodic report appeared to draw a distinction between members of recognized national minorities who were Georgian citizens and members of other ethnic minorities who were not. Recalling that the Convention also prohibited discrimination against non-citizens, she urged the State party to desist from using that term, as the distinction that it drew could be used to justify the exclusion of and/or discrimination against members of other ethnic minorities who were not Georgian citizens.

17. Taking note of the various legislative advances made by the State party, she drew particular attention to the amendment of the Criminal Code to establish the racial motivation of a crime as an aggravating circumstance and the adoption of the Law on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination, which was closely aligned with the anti-discrimination legislation of the European Union. It would be useful to know of the status enjoyed by the Convention in the domestic legal framework; the number of cases in which the Convention had been invoked and applied by the national courts; the number of complaints of racial discrimination registered from 2013 onwards; and the number of prosecutions brought for that offence. It should be recalled that the absence of complaints of racial discrimination did not necessarily indicate the absence of the phenomenon itself, rather it pointed to a lack of effective complaints mechanisms and mechanisms to monitor the implementation of the Convention.

18. Furthermore, the State party should expedite the adoption of the recommendations made by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance and the amendments drafted by the Public Defender aimed at further strengthening the country's anti-discrimination legislation, in particular the amendments obliging private actors to provide information to the Public Defender in cases involving racial discrimination.

19. The fact that the labour inspectorate, which was the body responsible for enforcing the anti-discrimination provisions of the revised Labour Code, had been inactive for several years was major cause for concern. She asked how the State party intended to address that gap in its oversight machinery. It would also be helpful to receive statistical data on employment, disaggregated by ethnic group. She asked how the State party planned to

reduce the high unemployment rate in areas where there was a high concentration of ethnic minority groups.

20. She invited the State party to provide an overview of its efforts to raise public awareness of the Law on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination and to indicate whether it had launched awareness-raising campaigns targeting specific ethnic minority groups and, in particular, women belonging to such groups. She would also be interested to learn of the indicators used to measure the impact of those efforts. She asked what measures the State party had taken to halt the activities of and outlaw associations promoting or inciting racial discrimination, particularly those targeting Muslims. She also wished to know whether law enforcement officers, prosecutors and judges received training designed to raise their awareness of the multiple dimensions of racial discrimination and to allow them to deal with the phenomenon effectively. She would be particularly interested to know whether law enforcement officers received pre-service training of that nature; whether in-service training on that subject was compulsory; and whether the completion of such in-service training could have a bearing on career advancement.

21. Turning to the Migration Strategy and Action Plan 2016-2020, she enquired about its budget and staffing levels and its main objectives and lines of action.

22. Noting that Roma children living in Tbilisi were not always provided with identity documents as a matter of course, she asked how the State party planned to remedy that shortcoming. The Committee would welcome additional information on the State party's strategy to guarantee those children access to appropriate education. Moreover, it was her understanding that children born to stateless parents living in Georgia might also be classified as stateless. She asked whether that was indeed the case and, if so, what measures the State party envisaged taking to prevent that situation from occurring. The Committee had also received reports that a large number of children were placed in institutional care in Georgia. She asked what proportion of those children belonged to ethnic minority groups.

23. She asked when the programme to repatriate the members of the Meskhetian Turk community in Georgia who had been exiled from the Soviet Socialist Republic of Georgia by the former Soviet Union in the 1940s would be rolled out, and what measures the State party envisaged taking to facilitate the social integration of repatriated persons; to guarantee them access to education, employment and health care; and to help them overcome any linguistic barriers that they might face. There was also a need to raise public awareness of the difficulties faced by repatriated persons. If the granting of Georgian citizenship to repatriated persons was made contingent, under the simplified procedure for that purpose, on their renouncing any other citizenship within a certain time frame, that could pose practical problems, as renouncing citizenship was not always a quick and straightforward process.

24. The Committee had received reports that asylum seekers were routinely denied entry to Georgia on the grounds of State security and were not informed of the reasons behind that decision. She asked when the bill on international protection would be adopted; whether it provided for the possibility of granting asylum seekers and refugees leave to remain on humanitarian grounds; and under what circumstances international protection or leave to remain could be withdrawn. She would also appreciate information on the protection afforded to asylum seekers and refugees who arrived at the Georgian border.

25. Lastly, she asked how the State party ensured that its cultural initiatives, including those carried out through the media, effectively contributed to the removal of barriers to interculturalism and full social integration.

26. **Mr. Murillo Martínez** said that the State party was to be commended for providing useful disaggregated data on the funding allocated to efforts to combat racial discrimination and to the construction of housing for internally displaced persons. He asked whether civil

society had contributed to the drafting of the Law on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination. Given that all citizens had the right to participate in the political life of the country, he would appreciate additional information on the representation of ethnic minority groups in national decision-making bodies.

27. Noting that the Constitution guaranteed the payment of compensation for damage arising from human rights violations, he asked whether the judicial bodies responsible for punishing racial discrimination were equipped with mechanisms for providing compensation to the victims of that phenomenon. He also wished to know whether the burden of proof could be reversed in cases involving racial discrimination. The list of exceptional circumstances under which the Government could restrict certain constitutional freedoms seemed to be quite extensive. He asked whether any complaints concerning the imposition of such restrictions had been lodged by groups that had suffered historical discrimination in Georgia.

28. **Mr. Avtonomov** said that, notwithstanding the marked decline in the ethnic minority population in the State party, he would be interested to know of the factors driving the decrease in the ethnic Georgian population.

29. Several ethnic groups had been exiled from the Soviet Socialist Republic of Georgia by the former Soviet Union in the 1940s and, while some of those groups had been repatriated and granted Georgian nationality, the State party still refused to recognize that groups such as the Meskhetian Turks had also been forcibly removed from their land on the basis of their ethnicity. The Committee noted with concern that the law on the repatriation of persons exiled from the Soviet Socialist Republic of Georgia by the former Soviet Union made no reference to the Meskhetian Turks and that the State party had not yet initiated their repatriation. He urged the State party to take measures to correct that historical injustice.

30. According to the State party's report, 5,841 persons had applied for repatriate status under the aforementioned law. However, the report did not specify the ethnic groups to which those persons belonged or the reasons for their exile. Furthermore, the fact that only 1,349 persons had been granted that status begged a number of questions, such as why so few applications had been approved given the number of exiled persons living outside the State party's territory and on what grounds the remainder had been rejected.

31. Lastly, he asked whether the State party had devised a programme of activities to commemorate the International Decade for People of African Descent.

32. **Mr. Kut** said that he was grateful to the Office of the Public Defender (Ombudsman) of Georgia for its excellent report. It was frank and comprehensive and had helped the Committee greatly in its consideration of the situation in the State party.

33. In its previous concluding observations (CERD/C/GEO/CO/4-5), the Committee had requested the State party to provide information within a year, i.e., by September 2012, on its follow-up to the recommendations contained in paragraphs 17 (the situation of the Roma), 21 (the situation of non-citizens and stateless persons) and 22 (access by asylum seekers to health care, education and employment). The State party had not done so. The Committee had found that surprising as the follow-up to the 2005 concluding observations had been provided on time. He asked the State party to pay more attention to follow-up on concluding observations in the future.

34. Having participated in the recent discussions on Georgia organized by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), he had noted that one issue that had been raised in the Committee's previous concluding observations was still giving rise to concern, namely the question of racism in political discourse and the media. The Public Defender's report showed that there was a legal framework in place to address the problem

but there was no indication that it was being applied through the courts, for example. The Committee would welcome some information in that regard.

35. With regard to the Meskhetian Turks, he said that fewer than 6,000 had applied for repatriate status, a very small proportion of the approximately 120,000 who had originally been deported. Of those, an even smaller number, some 1,300, had been granted citizenship between 2011 and 2014. Under the relevant regulations, they must renounce any other citizenship they might have on acquiring Georgian citizenship. Did that apply to other Georgian citizens as well? Did dual citizenship not exist in Georgia, and if it did, why should that particular group not be permitted to retain their other citizenship?

36. **Mr. Kemal** said that the delegation's opening statement showed how the State party's legislative machinery had been strengthened since 2011, notably with the adoption of the Law on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination in 2014. He was concerned, however, at the fact that implementation of that law was not as effective as it ought to be, for example in respect of acts of intolerance and violence against Muslims. The Committee did not normally address religious discrimination per se, but it did take an interest in discrimination based on descent or comprising an ethno-religious element. Some of the actions reported could constitute hate crimes or could seriously offend that sector of the State party's population. The Committee would like the Government to take notice and apply its own laws. It was important to investigate such acts and hold those responsible to account, and to provide compensation for harm. Long-term measures should be put in place to develop religious tolerance.

37. He suggested that the Government should look closely at the Public Defender's report and recommendations. It was one of the best reports the Committee had ever received from a national human rights institution. It was a demonstration of the Ombudsman's independence.

38. He would like to know if it was correct that the Georgian Orthodox Church was granted tax exemptions, which was not the case for other religious organizations. Among other things, the Public Defender's report mentioned the need for long-term education programmes for bilingual teachers of minority languages and effective mechanisms to inform minorities about civil integration and ethnic relations in a language they understood, as well as the need to ensure representation of national minorities in the central Government. It also recommended that a law on international protection for internally displaced persons should be adopted.

39. **Ms. McDougall** said that she would appreciate some statistics that might reassure the Committee that crimes involving persecution of Muslims were being prosecuted and that victims were aware of that fact. She would also appreciate an explanation of the term "civil integration", which was used throughout the State party's report.

40. The Convention covered the notion of indirect discrimination, a form of discrimination that was not necessarily intentional. It encompassed institutional discrimination, and also structural barriers in society that were effectively discriminatory. In that context, she was interested in the issue of language as it affected national minorities, who were unable to access institutions if they did not speak Georgian, and with whom the Government could not communicate fully. There were issues relating to schooling: when should education in the mother tongue give way to education in Georgian to enable students to master that language? Others related to employment: how could members of minorities enter the civil service, for example, if they could not pass a test in Georgian? She would appreciate the delegation's thoughts on the question of language as a structural barrier.

41. It would be useful for the Committee to receive disaggregated data showing the number of Afro-descendants in the population.

42. **Ms. Hohoueto** said that the new law on discrimination mentioned only "different forms" of discrimination; she would like to know what definition of discrimination was applied. She noted that, according to paragraph 83 of the State party's core document (HRI/CORE/1/Add.90/Rev.1), international treaties signed by Georgia that were not contrary to the Constitution prevailed over domestic law. She wondered why the State party might wish to ratify any treaties that were contrary to its Constitution.

43. According to paragraph 103 of the State party's report, there had been no complaints under articles 142 or 142-1 of the Criminal Code. That might not indicate an absence of discrimination but could reflect a lack of information among the general public. She would appreciate statistics regarding complaints under other articles of the Code and any action taken, disaggregated by ethnic group. She noted that, in 3 of the 33 cases of discrimination on religious grounds referred to, those involved had been "diverted from criminal liability". She would like to know what that meant.

44. With regard to the requirement for displaced persons seeking Georgian nationality to demonstrate that they had renounced any other citizenship, she would like to know if the delegation really believed that persons who had been displaced under the old Soviet regime would be able to produce the necessary documents. The requirement appeared to be an obstacle to obtaining citizenship.

45. **Ms. Shepherd** said that the State party had become a bridge for migrants from Africa, some of whom left Georgia to go on to Europe, while others stayed. Apparently it was hard for them to find employment, even if they were highly qualified, or housing. In some cases footballers from African countries were enticed to Georgia with the promise of joining clubs there but were then stranded and, if they had entered the country illegally, could find themselves in prison. She would therefore like to know how many Africans were living in the State party and how their rights under article 5 of the Convention were ensured.

46. She understood that a new visa regime had been introduced in September 2014 but had had a disproportionate impact on non-European citizens, who were being charged a fee for entry at the border. She would like to know if there were any plans to waive the visa requirement for vulnerable people wishing to enter the country.

47. According to the table in paragraph 119 of the report, members of five ethnic minorities were employed in the Ministry of Internal Affairs. She would like to know what persons were comprised in the sixth category, "Other".

48. From the figures given in annex II to the report, she noted that it was not until 2013 that a small number of persons with humanitarian or refugee status from African countries had been mentioned as having entered the country. Did that mean that not many Africans were coming to Georgia or that not many were admitted? Perhaps more recent figures might show more people coming from African countries.

49. **Mr. Yeung Sik Yuen** said that the State party should update its core document, which dated from 1999. Meanwhile, looking at paragraph 78 of the core document, he noted that judges were elected for not less than 10 years. He would like to know whether that implied that the length of tenure might vary from judge to judge, i.e., that some might serve for 10 years but others for longer. No retirement age was mentioned: could that vary also? Could a judge who had been appointed for 10 years be reappointed for a further term? The answer to that question might have a bearing on the question as to whether the judiciary was truly independent. He would like to know how many judges there were and whether they represented a cross-section of Georgian society. Did any judges belong to national minorities, particularly in regions where minorities lived in large numbers?

50. On the matter of forcibly displaced persons referred to in paragraph 143 of the report, he calculated that, allowing for the 1,349 applications for repatriate status processed and

approved between 2011 and 2014, it would take 10 years to process the more than 4,000 applications that remained outstanding. The current applicants were probably the great-great-grandchildren of those originally displaced, and in 10 years another generation would pass. He would welcome the delegation's views.

51. **Mr. Marugán** said that he would like to know if all the information about police human rights training given in paragraphs 111 to 117 of the report was up to date. He was not clear about how the police were trained in identifying particular offences and whether training was given only to new recruits, on induction, or also to experienced officers. He would like to know exactly how the Public Defender was involved in police training and whether NGOs and other institutions also participated.

52. What statistical data were available on the dissemination of ideas based on racial hatred and incitement to racial discrimination? How many cases had there been? How were intolerant remarks made by senior politicians or officials punished? Many such incidents occurred on the Internet. He would like to know if there were special units of the police or prosecutors' offices responsible for identifying such cases, which required special training.

53. According to paragraph 21 of the report, the Law on Broadcasting prohibited the airing of programmes that promoted discrimination against persons or groups on various grounds, and the Georgian Public Broadcaster was obliged to reflect the country's ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious diversity. He would like to know if there were specific examples of programmes being banned, what independent oversight bodies existed and what penalties they were able to impose.

54. He wished to know what body was responsible for implementing article 2 of the Labour Code, which prohibited labour discrimination, whether that body was independent and how many cases of discrimination had been brought before the courts. The delegation should also state whether it was true that labour inspections were concerned solely with health and safety issues, whether domestic legislation prohibited discrimination in recruitment and selection, and what measures were taken to punish discrimination and incitement to hatred in sport.

55. **Ms. Li** Yanduan, while commending the State party on the progress that it had made in implementing the Convention, said that she would appreciate further information on efforts to facilitate the inclusion of ethnic minorities, to promote their enjoyment of economic, social and political rights and to guarantee their participation in decision-making processes. She asked what specific steps were being taken to combat hate speech against minority groups and invited the State party to update its common core document (HRI/CORE/1/Add.90/Rev.1).

56. **Ms. Totladze** (Georgia) said that an updated version of the core document had been finalized with the cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and would be made available in the near future.

57. **Ms. Ghogheliani** (Georgia) said that, in recent years, both the total population of Georgia and the number of persons belonging to ethnic minorities had decreased. The largest minorities were Azerbaijanis, who accounted for 6.3 per cent of the population, and Armenians, who made up 4.5 per cent. Azerbaijani and Armenian communities were concentrated in the regions of Samtskhe-Javakheti, Kvemo Kartli and Kakheti. Other, smaller minorities were generally better integrated. Between 2002 and 2014, the number of Kists had fallen to 5,700, while the number of Roma had grown from 472 to 600. More detailed statistics were available on the website of the National Statistics Office.

58. In 2015, the Government had adopted the State Strategy for Civic Equality and Integration, and an accompanying action plan for the period from 2015 to 2020. The task of

implementing the Strategy had been assigned to the Office of the State Minister for Reconciliation and Civic Equality, and to an inter-agency commission.

59. The aim of the Strategy was to improve the situation of ethnic minorities in Georgia with regard to participation in civic and political life, access to information and the media, social and economic conditions and opportunities, access to high-quality education and the preservation of cultural identity. Special attention was paid to enhancing participation in decision-making processes and access to public services, including through the removal of language barriers. The Strategy, of which gender mainstreaming was a key component, also envisaged the protection of the cultural and linguistic rights of smaller minorities and support for the integration of the Roma.

60. As part of the Strategy, the Government was committed to providing free court interpretation services and discussions were under way on the establishment of public advisory councils, which would be tasked with, inter alia, highlighting important issues for ethnic minorities during decision-making processes and evaluating the impact on minorities of government decisions and programmes.

61. Steps were being taken to amend legislation governing civil service internships in order to create more opportunities for students belonging to ethnic minorities. Agencies under the auspices of the Ministry of Internal Affairs had recruited members of the Belarusian, Greek, Jewish, Lithuanian and Polish minorities, among others. The national police and defence academies, which were open to ethnic minorities, had introduced Georgian language courses and there were master's programmes on the elimination of racial discrimination and on policing in a multi-ethnic society.

62. Seven members of Georgia's Parliament belonged to ethnic minorities and, in the regions of Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli, Armenians and Azerbaijanis, respectively, were proportionally represented on local councils. Minorities were well represented within the civil service and the Government was working with political parties to promote civic integration and to ensure the inclusion of minorities in party lists. The full and equal participation of minorities in elections was guaranteed, in part as a result of the establishment of a working group on minority issues within the Central Election Commission. The duties of the working group included providing minorities with all necessary election information in their native languages and raising awareness of election procedures, particularly among women and young people. The Commission also gave grants to civil society organizations that were engaged in efforts to raise awareness among ethnic minorities.

63. Between 2012 and 2015, 275 members of the Roma community had been registered, afforded appropriate legal status and offered free legal advice. Steps were being taken to register the remaining members of the community, some of whom preferred to remain in isolation. Special educational programmes had been developed for Roma children and, between 2014 and 2015, the number of such children who were enrolled in State schools had increased from 88 to 155. Work was also carried out with Roma parents and a thematic working group on the Roma had been created within the inter-agency commission responsible for implementing the State Strategy for Civic Equality and Integration.

64. **Mr. Jashi** (Georgia) said that a package of legislative amendments aimed at improving the situation of street children had been approved at second reading by Parliament. Under those amendments, homeless children would be provided with identity documents free of charge. A number of programmes were already in place to guarantee the participation of street children in sports and other cultural and educational activities.

65. Under a project for vulnerable children that was partly funded by the European Union, three mobile teams had been established in Tbilisi and two day-care centres, two crisis intervention centres and two training centres had been set up. The aim of the project

was to provide immediate support to street children with the ultimate goal of caring for them under the existing child protection system or of reintegrating them into their biological families. Between 2014 and 2015, 536 children living and/or working in the streets had received assistance. A total of 274 had been sent to day-care centres or shelters, of whom 25 per cent had been members of the Roma community.

66. **Ms. Jokhadze** (Georgia) said that all children in Georgia were provided with free primary and secondary education, and that members of ethnic minorities were taught in Georgian and in their native language. The Government had drafted an educational policy document for ethnic minorities in which it had developed the concept of bilingual education. The national curriculum was taught in several minority languages, including Ossetian and, from 2016, Chechen.

67. Pursuant to a bill that was being discussed in Parliament, preschool education was inclusive and open to all. Once the bill was adopted, State institutions would have a duty to ensure that the preschool education system was equipped to cater to all children, regardless of their ethnicity.

68. From 2016, students from ethnic minorities would be allowed to sit vocational school entrance exams in their mother tongue. Successful applicants would subsequently be able to take intensive Georgian language courses to enable them to pursue further education. The Ministry of Education and Science had drawn up a programme for the social inclusion of all children, including members of the Roma community, one of whom had recently become the first to enrol in a vocational training programme in Georgia.

69. In 2003, the Ministry had drafted a policy paper on the education of children not in the school system and, since 2015, had been developing education modules for street children that would be taught in day-care centres throughout the country. It was also providing training to teachers and parents in the regular school system on how to deal appropriately with former street children.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.